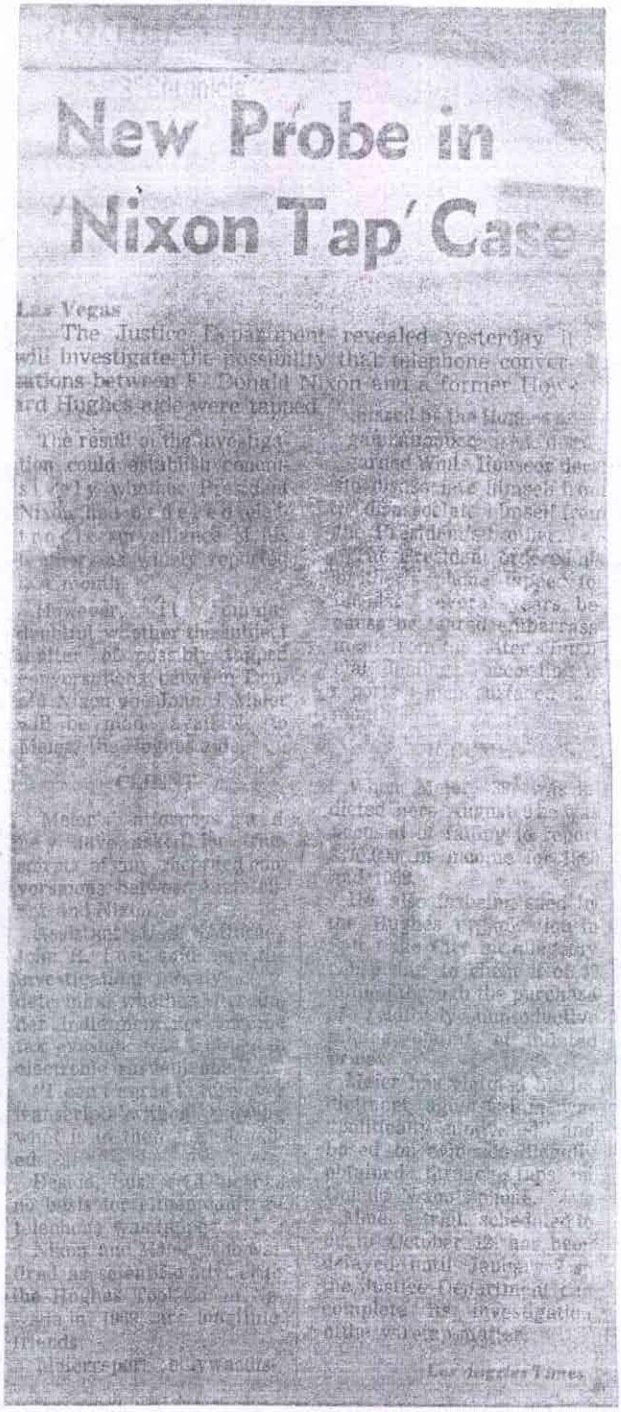

New Probe in 'Nixon Tap' Case

Las Vegas

The Justice Department revealed yesterday it will investigate the possibility that telephone conversations between F. Donald Nixon and a former Howard Hughes aide were tapped.

The result of the investigation could establish conclusively whether President Nixon had ordered the wiretapping of his brother's telephone. It could also establish whether Nixon was actively involved in the Watergate cover-up.

However, it remains doubtful whether the subject matter of possible tapped conversations between Donald Nixon and John J. Meier will be made available to Watergate investigators.

Meier, a former aide to Howard Hughes, has asked for immunity from prosecution before he will testify about conversations between Donald Nixon and himself.

Justice Department officials have said that they will investigate whether Meier's telephone was tapped.

Meier has been a key figure in the Watergate investigation because of his relationship with Donald Nixon and because of his role in the purchase of property in San Clemente by Hughes Tool Co. and subsequent sale of the property to Nixon friends.

Meier's trial, scheduled to begin October 22, has been delayed until January 7 as the Justice Department completes its investigation of the wiretapping matter.

Los Angeles Times